

Project Narrative

**STONE RIDGE VIEWS**

**Preliminary Plat Application**

**(FORMERLY REFERED TO AS STONE RIDGE CLUB)**

Mc Allister, Montana

(A MAJOR SUBDIVISION)

**PREFACE**

Please note that the following narrative varies slightly from the original narrative submitted at the Pre-Application review. In response to suggestions and comments from adjoining property owners, interested local residents, and Planning Board members, both the number of lots and the scope of the project have been reduced to mitigate as much as possible their concerns and to help maintain harmony in the area.

As noted below, the number of lots has been reduced as far as economically feasible from 32 lots to 18 lots. The common horse pasture, barn, corrals and RV storage areas have been eliminated, as well as the club house, and tennis court. In short, the development will no longer be managed as a club (hence the name-change). The total amount of jointly owned open space and trails have also been reduced to accommodate larger lots. Home sites have generally been reduced in number, but follow the same general road layout as in the Pre-Application review with the relocation of some of the home sites in areas previously included in common open space and horse pasture. The cul-de-sacs have been reduced in length to accommodate Planning Board member concerns. Wildlife continues to be at the forefront of our layout and a wildlife barrier free corridor has been established generally following the same path and shape as originally defined as needing protection. Also preserved by common open space designations on the Plat are areas bordering the creek and the archaeological area identified along the bluff towards the east side of the property.

A request for a variance to allow the secondary (emergency use only) egress road to be built to a lesser standard is still included with this application to help mitigate concerns of views and enforcement of "emergency only" use voiced by concerned Elk Hills residents.

1) The Property

The subject property is as shown on the attached sketch and is owned by the Developers, Stone Ridge Club, Inc. (Previously referred to as Sam P. Scott and Sherry J. Scott), of P.O. Box 280, McAllister, MT 59740).

The property shares a common property line with the neighboring Elk Hills Subdivision to the west and is immediately adjacent to the Elk Hills Road right-of-way. The property to the north was subdivided into 20 acre tracts as part of the Elk Hills Subdivision. Comprised of Elk Hills lots 29 through 45 the property was purchased by one entity and released from all Elk Hills Covenants. The property is currently used for livestock grazing and recreation. The neighboring properties to the East are used for ranch grazing and are undeveloped. To the south, the property is bordered by the Wey's subdivision with the exception of one small portion of the property that borders a single private property and the South Meadow Creek Road right-of-way. The property is not zoned.

The southern property line generally follows the course of South Meadow creek west to east then makes a jog to the south where it meets the South Meadow Creek Road right-of-way. The property is generally comprised of shallow soiled, sloping, native grassed meadow land bordering South Meadow Creek, and a higher area of dry land sage brush and native grass covered low hills and drainage swales.

## 2) The Planned Development

It is anticipated that this phased residential development will take longer than three years to develop, so an Overall Development Plan will be submitted with the Preliminary Plat. The intent of this development is to provide future home owners with an appreciation of place, and community atmosphere through designated open space, riding, hiking and walking trails. The development is designed to protect the on-site portions of the existing stream and riparian zone for the enjoyment of all Home Owner's Association members by designating a stream access corridor open space along the north side of South Meadow Creek. The Home Owners Association will be responsible for maintenance and protection of the stream access corridor.

The Stone Ridge Club is planned to be comprised of 18 lots with several designated open spaces. The lots vary in size from approximately three acres to slightly over twenty acres. The 18 home sites are clustered loosely into four main areas which will be divided into consecutive build-out phases in the development of the property. Each individually owned lot under 5 acres will have a designated three-quarter-acre building envelope, and each lot over 5 acres will have a designated 1-acre building envelope in which all homes and out buildings will be confined. Wildlife friendly lot line fences will be allowed, and private fences and screened dog kennels will be allowed within the designated building areas. All fences will meet the standards as set forth in the Design Review Guidelines, but under no circumstance will fences be allowed or approved in the designated wildlife corridor, or stream access corridor. Horses will be allowed at the rate of one horse per five acres up to a maximum of two horses per lot. In no case will horses be allowed on lots below five acres in size. Landscaping will be permitted anywhere within the designated building area. Areas within 100 feet of all buildings will be designated as a Wildlands/Wildfire Interface zone and subject to guidelines as noted in the Stone Ridge Wildlands/Wildfire Interface Plan. The plan will provide a protective buffer against the spread of wildfire while creating an interface of natural vegetation bridging the gap between the "built" environment and the native habitat preserved in the designated open spaces. The property occasionally has elk cross its northern border that includes sage brush and shows some sign of small wildlife such as rabbits and birds, and the area is being protected by a designated Wildlife Corridor. The

wildlife corridor will be maintained in its natural state and no development will be allowed within it, with the exception of walking, horseback riding, or maintenance trails. Wildlife including deer and antelope also frequent the open space near the ridge top near the east side of the subdivision and regularly utilize the creek bottom. Both areas are being preserved as designated open space to accommodate the occasional wildlife and for the limited use and enjoyment of subdivision lot owners.

Home owners will be encouraged to incorporate native vegetation and wildlife habitat within their landscaping. No hunting or discharging of firearms will be allowed within the development. The proposed open spaces are being preserved for the use of wildlife, walking, horseback riding, and enjoyment of the lot owners as set forth in the covenants.

The Home Owners Association will retain ownership of and provide maintenance for the common open spaces, stream access corridor open space, trails, yearly weed control as outlined in the Covenants and Weed Management Plan, roads, associated well, pond or other water storage draft facilities as may be required by the Fire Department, through collection of yearly home owner fees. The Home Owners Association will maintain the development's perimeter fences on an equal cost share basis with adjoining subdivisions to the south and west, and adjoining land owners to the north and east. The designated wildlife corridor will be maintained by the property owner's, but the Home Owner's Association will have the right to oversee the preservation and maintenance of the Wildlife Corridor and will have the right to intercede and/or require the individual lot owner to comply with the provisions as set forth in the covenants.

### 3) Goals and Objectives

#### *Land Use:*

The development is being placed adjacent to two existing developments thereby helping to confine sprawl to areas where housing developments already occur. The development will support a mix of activities. The development will preserve several open spaces, a wildlife barrier free corridor and provide for 18 residential lots. Graded and in some cases gravel-based walking, jogging and horseback riding trails located throughout the development will promote easy connections between housing clusters and development amenities while promoting the enjoyment of the outdoors, wildlife, stream corridor and view sheds.

#### *The Economy:*

The development will help promote the economy through a larger area tax base, which will in turn help provide the County with more income for maintaining local county roads, schools, and emergency services. Home owner employment and individual necessity requirements will help promote growth and year-round stability in area businesses. Approximately forty acres of the land has been used recently for pasture for a few locally owned horses, but most of the property has not been used for any major agricultural use for several years. The owner of the property allowed an area rancher to utilize

this year's summer pasture and to help reduce the threat of wildfire by having the property intermittently grazed. There is an existing useable irrigation ditch on the property with water rights to irrigate the lower portion of the site. Water rights will remain under ownership of the Developer until and if a workable irrigation plan can be designed and placed under control of the Association for irrigation of open spaces and potential use by individual lot owners for irrigation of properties located below or adjacent to the ditch. Such a plan will need to consider and address all aspects of the irrigation including mitigation of potential damage to any affected lots, homes, and/or structures. There is little if any lost agricultural value as most of the property is dry, rocky, has very shallow top soil and has limited economic value for pasturage or hay production.

#### *The Environment:*

As noted above, this development is being designed to protect the land, stream, wildlife and views through its designation of open spaces, wildlife barrier free corridor, the spacing of homes, and the development of an internal trail system. To help protect views of the night sky, exterior lighting will be strictly controlled and enforced. A comprehensive set of subdivision covenants, restrictions, and design guidelines will help insure that the overall concept of this development is maintained for the future of its inhabitants.

#### *Recreation:*

The development supports and has provided for several recreational activities, including walking, jogging, wildlife viewing, horseback riding, and fishing in South Meadow creek. Use of motorcycles, ATV's and other similar off-road vehicles will not be allowed for recreation or sport on any land or parcel within the development, although they may be used with prudence for general maintenance of development or individual home owner properties. In no case shall they be allowed to be operated in such a manner as to be considered a public nuisance.

#### *Public Health and Safety:*

In addition to the enjoyment of the rural setting and its associated health benefits, the subdivision will include a well and storage structure or pond capable of refilling and augmenting local fire-fighting equipment with enough capacity to meet or exceed fire department requirements. The development has made provisions for an emergency only secondary access from the development to the existing Elk Hills Subdivision road and connecting to the interior road system and subsequent egress route of this development. This emergency only road will also benefit the Elk Hills Subdivision by providing an emergency exit through this subdivision, which it is currently lacking. The emergency only access will be identified at each end, and blocked with removable bollards as limited to "Emergency Use Only".

***Roads:***

Interior roads will be built to county standards and maintained through the Home Owner's Association. The applicant is requesting a variance for the proposed emergency only road and access in the northern portion of the site to allow emergency passage on a 14 feet wide single lane, graded road providing emergency only access from the upper Elk Hills Road with the interior road system of the development. The Home Owner's Association will be required to contribute its fair share of the cost of maintenance and snow removal for the existing Elk Hills road from the emergency access to its connection with the existing South Meadow Creek County Road, and will be included in the Covenants.

***Water Rights:***

There are 46 shares out of a total 200 shares of Elk Hills Irrigation Company under ownership of the developer. As noted above, the water rights will remain under ownership of the Developer until and if a workable irrigation plan can be designed and placed under control of the Association for irrigation of open spaces and potential use by individual lot owners for irrigation of properties located below or adjacent to the ditch. There are no anticipated additional impacts on the Elk Hills Irrigation Company ditch or associated water users with this development, as the ditches with the exception of engineered culverts at road crossings, will not be disturbed and will remain in their current locations and located in easements on the plat.

***Special Improvement Districts or Rural Improvement Districts:***

There are no known special improvement or rural improvement districts associated with this property at this time.

***Existing Covenants or Deed Restrictions:***

There are no known existing covenants or deed restrictions associated with this property at this time.

**4) Variance Request:**

The applicant is requesting the following Variance with this Preliminary Plat Submittal:

**Variance to the County Road Standard to allow a proposed emergency use only access and a short connecting road to be built to a lesser standard.** The applicant is requesting a variance for the proposed emergency only road and access in the northern portion of the site to allow emergency passage on a single lane, fourteen (14) feet wide, graded road providing emergency only access from the main Elk Hills Road with the interior road system of the development. The graded road will be reseeded with native grasses and maintained in a manner consistent with emergency requirements. Removable bollards and an "Emergency Use Only" sign will be placed at the junction of the emergency only road and the connecting interior subdivision proposed County Standard road, and will also be placed at the junction of the emergency egress and the Elk Hills Road.